

Robertson (C. A.)

## DECORATION DAY.

ALBANY CELEBRATION, MAY 31, 1875.

ORATION BY DR. CHARLES A. ROBERTSON.

SURGEON  
13.89

*Comrades of the Grand Army:*—As our representatives to-day have done in person, so, let us, in mind, go forth to "God's acres" of green,

"Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,"

above the narrow beds of our sleeping brave.

In those solitudes, where every fresh tenant but makes the loneliness more lonely, unsatisfactory speculations about the dread certainties and uncertainties of the grave will invade reflective minds, and various emotions will stir the sensibilities of the living; but the dead who lie there manifest no concern for anything—they are neither glad nor sorry that the returning Spring has again clothed the sod above them with a brighter hue, and no token of recognition comes from them to tell that their solitude is cheered by loving friends, who this day visit their silent abodes.

"They sleep their last sleep, they have fought their last battle,  
No sound shall awake them to glory again."

Lovingly and tenderly the trees droop their graceful branches over them, the wind makes sad music among the leaves, the chirp of the squirrel and the notes of little birds break at intervals the deep stillness of the place, and the great sun pours over all his warm and generous light, yet they slumber on and seem as heedless at this bright and tranquil season as they are indifferent when the gale howls through the leadless branches, and the storm-swept heavens hide the sun, and the little birds have fled to warmer climes, away from the frosts and fury of winter. Still, we would fondly imagine that, although the bodies of our dead comrades are mouldering in their graves, their undaunted souls are somehow about us and with us to-day. We would fain believe that their pure spirits have come back

for a while to earth from the celestial presence of the All-Father, and are glad as they watch us, when with loving hands we strew the beautiful flowers on the lowly mounds, beneath which the kindred dust of their bodies is returning to mother-earth again. We would fain believe them more happy as they witness how we will not willingly let their memory die, and as they soar back to the divine Presence, that they will bear with them sweet recollections of this hour. It may be such imaginings are vain, and it may be they are not—yet it is good now to indulge them, and to feel that "it is not all of life to live, or all of death to die."

And why are those graves more to us than other graves? Why do we go out, year after year, and deck them with flowers? Our homes are bright and cheerful, and our hearts are gladdened there by the reciprocal love of kindred and friends—why do we leave them to visit the sad retreats, where we meet with no word of greeting or smile of welcome—where the very air seems laden with the sobs and farewells of stricken mourners, who have moved slowly along the narrow paths, taken one final look on the closed coffin-lid, and then, in agony of grief, torn themselves forever away from the dear bodies of their loved and lost? Oh, no; those are not joyous places, where the gay may throng to laugh, and the frivolous pursue their pleasure, for our understandings hear the fearful though silent utterances of the dead, calling "to corruption, thou art my father; to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister."

Still, forbidding as these considerations seem, there are strong and good reasons for repairing thither, for—

"That's hallowed ground, where mourned and missed,  
The lips repose our love has kissed;"

and parent and child, lover and spouse, who visit there feel not only fresh exaltation of the kindest sentiments of their nature, while they commune with the influences that dwell there, but a tender and generous sympathy commingles with their meditations, when they behold the numerous monuments around that testify the bereavement and sorrow of other human hearts, and an irresistible conviction, that no scepticism can withstand, comes over the intelligent mind that all this affection is not objectless, cannot be wasted; that somewhere and somehow in the infinite hereafter it must have its attainment and satisfaction, since all God's argosies, wherever launched, whatever expanse of ocean they sail upon, must reach their shore at last.

But, comrades, we do not visit there merely to mourn for kindred and friends. We do not go simply to join in the private griefs of torn and bleeding hearts. We gather as children of our great country to manifest how we love and honor, and cherish the memory of the valiant dead, whose lives were sacrificed in her service. It is natural and right for men to protect and cherish their own families, but it is grand and heroic in men to rise to higher and broader planes of action, to recognize what is for the common good of their fellow-men, and to devote their energies and their lives to the great cause of country and humanity.

In those narrow graves, which we this day decorate, patriot soldiers are lying, and we stand here to glorify them. In no grander cause could they have fallen than that which emblazons their memory. Higher was that cause than that of country even—for it was the cause of humanity, of the world. They fell in the great issue between freedom and despotism, fought out in the tremendous conflict between the North and the South.

The magnitude and importance of the contest imparted glory, in proportion, on the heroes whose lives were given for the salvation of the Union and the maintenance of freedom; and this day is properly set apart and consecrated to make us freshly remember the fearful ordeal through which our country has passed, to keep forever green in our grateful hearts the memory of the devoted patriots who died for her, and to furnish appropriate occasion for decorating their last resting places with the most beautiful tokens of regard.

To-day I seem to see the great tender spirit of humanity regarding sadly the wide arena of strife, where two mighty forces urged their gigantic struggle, and the lives of men were thrown off into eternity by the tremendous enginery of war, countless as the drops of spray flung from the revolving wheels of vast machinery. She now bends in sorrow over the mounds, where heaps of slain, friend and foe "in one red burial blent," were multitudinously incathed; or casts her eyes contemplatively upon the innumerable graves, thickly strown all over the expanse, and her sympathies go forth in deep commiseration for the bleeding hearts of the living, torn by

the violence that snatched away their unreturning brave, and for desolate households, grieving for the encoffined ones, who only came home to die.

But, anon, other emotions awaken, as she peers deeper into the secrets of the dead, and gazes through the portals of the grave into that mysterious realm beyond, into which our hidden comrades have passed. Through an atmosphere filled with tears of bereavement, falling from myriads of weeping eyes that flow with grief for the lost millions of the war—filled with tears, but lighted up by the glowing rays of loving affection that shine through the falling drops, she discerns the memories of the numerous dead projected as rainbow forms into a beautiful spectral world. Glorious they seem in the association with their noble deeds in life, and the radiance of their transfigured appearances illuminates the paths of duty for them they left behind. She recognizes that the brave and good never die, that their virtue forever manifests itself in the mystic inspiration of elevated sentiments and grand ideas that make the world better for their having lived in it, that embolden truth, encourage faith in man, and strengthen love and devotion to country. She knows and rejoices that their lives, given for country and for liberty, are not wasted, are not lost, like those of Persian and Turkish hordes spent on Greece, of Goths and Vandals on Rome, or of the French and Spaniards on modern Italy, only to enable despots, wading ruthlessly through blood and plunder, to gloat in wicked triumphs secured by the prowess of injustice, but shall continue on through the advancing centuries, prompting and encouraging men, like the voice of God, to break through all tyrannical and superstitious errors and away from all misconduct, and liberate the world from the prisons of ignorance and the thralldom of craft.

Already the years are multiplying since the war was inaugurated; and boys and girls of that day are now become men and women, and some who were not then born are boys and girls mingling in my audience to-day.

Let us, then, in mind, for a while roll back the wheels of time and cast aside the involving shadows that obscure the past, and contemplate the stirring scenes in the appalling tragedy of the "Great Rebellion."

Hark! Listen to that sound! "*Fort Sumter is fired on!*" The word goes from mouth to mouth! The lightning leaps along ten thousand wires, and every telegraph clicks the portentous sentence! Men gather at the street corners to discuss the ominous tidings! Travelers, tradesmen, farmers, artisans and professional men are seized with dismay and indignation! The tidings did not seem to be in words, but the very booming of the gun, rending their ears, and thundering its terrible import into their hearts!

It seemed as if the report of that fratricidal cannon would never die. As it sped on, it grew louder and louder and louder! Its peal passed northward up through the Keystone State, the Empire State, the Old Bay State,

echoing among the granite hills of New Hampshire, the green mountains of Vermont, and the forests of Maine—westward, over the Alleghanies and across the prairies, away beyond the Rocky Mountains, that awful note went on. All the South heard it, and her wisest citizens shuddered, as though it were the trump of doom, announcing that she, who was then fair and hopeful as a bride, must soon welter in blood and writhe in flame, and then sink forlorn and remorseful into poverty and desolation.

Even the ocean did not stay that sound of prophetic woe! Beneath and over the waters, it passed on, and its dread resonance was heard in all the kingdoms of the old world: "*Fort Sumter has been fired on!*—the Union is dissolved and republicanism is a failure!" Then the dynasties of Europe wagged their heads and were glad, while the friends of human rights and of liberty were sad and anxious. Potentates, that impiously asserted royalty by the grace of God, and haughty nobilities, claiming lordship and privilege as their heritage, experienced renewed vigor, and made ready to draw the chains of despotism more tightly about the fettered liberties of the people. Even the unowned emperor of the French, crimsoned and hateful with murder, soon seized a fancied opportunity to foist a foreign sovereign on the neighboring republic of Mexico, in contempt of the traditions and power of the United States, whose dissolution, as the usurper hoped and believed, would make it impossible to resent his menace and his insolence.

"Nothing can be more interesting to an observing and reflective mind, than to study the causes which lead to a great civil war, to examine with care what is the essential trouble, to watch with painful interest and apprehension, the steps of contending parties, and, in the silence of the heart, to bless all who have breathed, however vainly, words of forbearance and kindness, who have expostulated, explained, conciliated and labored to procure a pause before the sword is drawn, the musketry is cracking and booming of cannon send peals afar to tell that the bloody work of war, with its sickening horrors and atrocious crimes, is begun." But I may not now bring before you the review of all the excitements and disturbances prior to that great shock of sound, by which the Union seemed to be riven from East to West—or recall the explanations, extenuations, compromises and offers of further compromise, the efforts of cool, dispassionate and pacific statesmen endeavoring to exhaust the resources of peace, and postpone if not prevent the dread arbitrament of war. Sufficient is it to say that all was in vain.

The day and the hour for the irrepressible conflict to be fought out had come. A new party with new men now appears on the political stage.

The weak, undecided and purposeless occupant of the presidential chair had vanished. During the waning days of his administration the unchecked miscreants of his cabinet had

treacherously and cunningly disposed the sword and purse of the nation in such a manner as to be least effectual in hindering the machinations of secession.

That was a time when the situation of the country seemed desperate indeed. When the statesmen could spurn the constitution and sneer at the union; when the soldier, trained at his country's expense, was ready to fling away his epaulettes and draw a traitor's sword; when the once loyal fighter on the seas, who had early learned to magnify the glory won from the proud "mistress of the waves" by the navy of America, could covet the pirate flag of a mutineer in order to plunder and destroy the very commerce he was sworn to protect; when trusted members of the president's cabinet betrayed their trusts, and perfidiously used their high positions to cripple the nation by weakening its armaments and diverting its resources in favor of conspirators, it surely was, for all who loved their country and its free institutions, who were proud of its brilliant history, who rejoiced in its grandeur and power in the present, and who contemplated with exultation the magnificent heritage which the future seemed to promise, a time to regard with anxiety and distress.

The great ship of state had been sailing on to a magnificent destiny, until the years had well nigh grown to a century. So propitious had been the breezes, so almost unbroken had been the waters, it seemed as if her sails were swelled by the unwevering trade-winds of prosperity, until the force of this adverse gale came storming against her. What wonder, then, when it was found there was mutiny on board, and it was not known who was faithful and who was false, when the troublous times heaved in raging and threatening billows, and the head winds drove furiously from the region of disunion, what wonder, I say, was it, that the noble craft so struck aback seemed stunned for a moment, and to stand staggered amid the tempestuous elements, with her sails shivering, uncertain whether she would be driven back to the shores of despotism, steered by mutinous hands, or could beat her way against the opposing forces? But, thank God! the situation was recognized. Quickly the clear-sighted mariners saw that she must shift the tack on which she was sailing, and over the storm a trumpet-voice was heard to ring out the command—"ready, about!" Faithful men sprang to their posts, and when the order came to put the helm "*hard-a-lee,*" their promptness and efficient seamanship were manifested by the fluttering canvas and the rattling cordage, and the altered course with which she stretched away again with filling sails towards freedom and success.

But, leaving our metaphor, we now see sitting in the great chair of state that plain, uncouth man, who had been called by the people's vote to be the nation's head, but compelled to steal in disguise through Pennsylvania to the capital of the country, to avoid the devices of lurking conspirators, and escape the fell purpose of secret assassins. From his large humane heart, wells forth kindness



for all, hatred for none. Every conclusion formed in his clear mind was a crystal of logic. In his understanding, daily grew the appreciation of the vastness of the problem that he must solve, and of the great responsibility that rested on him. Immovable and unalterable was the determination of his will—the *Union must and shall be preserved*.

Imagine the thoughts and feelings of Abraham Lincoln as he sat in that chair and pondered over the appalling situation of the country of which he was chief magistrate. He had occupied it but little more than a month, when the roar of Beauregard's cannonade at Charleston announced in thunderous accents that the management of a revolution was devolved on him. He felt conscious of a statesman's intelligence for preserving civil order, but he questioned how far he could command the enterprise of a hero to suppress a mighty insurrection.

He took a far-reaching survey over the land—he saw a "country vast in extent, with natural advantages unexampled, with immense lakes in which almost any of the kingdoms of Europe might be sunk, rivers that seemed like descending seas—a country fit to teem with life and glow with the arts of peace—the new world, where it should seem the labors and grandeur and happiness of mankind might give the final consummation of the planet itself"—he cast a retrospective glance on its proud history—recalled when with only three millions of people, it spurned the yoke of England, and defied her power to impose it—in his ears rang anew the brave eloquence of Patrick Henry, of Robert and William Livingston, of John and Samuel Adams, of Christopher Gadsden, and of John Rutledge, that seemed, in the words of James Otis, like "the prophetic song of the Sibyl chanting the spring-time of a new empire." He saw rising above the mists of tyranny the day-star of the American Union. He heard the trumpet peal of Massachusetts—God bless her!—calling on the colonies for an American congress; and, when all others hesitated, and the great creative measure was in extreme peril, and American resistance to British tyranny seemed about to become a mockery, he caught the response of South Carolina—God help her!—as she pronounced for the congress and founded the Union, through the achievement of the unbending will and impetuous integrity of her great statesman, the magnanimous, unwavering, fearless patriot, Christopher Gadsden. His mind dwelt long on that first congress, held in New York city, where on natural justice, as an everlasting foundation, was laid the frame-work of American liberties. His heart throbbed afresh, as he listened to the immortal words uttered there by the great South Carolinian—"There ought to be no New England man, no New Yorker, known on the continent, but all of us Americans"—and the deep *Amen* moved all his soul.

Then his thoughts rapidly ran over the events of the revolutionary war, those terrible days that tried the souls of our fathers. The battles of Lexington and Concord and Bunker

Hill, of Bennington and Stillwater and Saratoga, of Trenton and Princeton and Monmouth—the dreadful sufferings of the winter encampment at Valley Forge, the destitution of the soldiers, the impoverishment of the treasury, and the unexampled heroism, patience and patriotic persistence of the illustrious Washington—all crowded on his imagination, until finally he saw the black clouds of war roll away, and a youthful nation arise, triumphant from the struggle for the liberty of the broad land, which it had wrested from a powerful sovereign, and, from the pinnacle of the most heroic and exalted achievement the world ever witnessed, wave the flag of victory, and send forth the glad greeting of popular freedom and virtue in the new world to all the tyranny-cursed and hope-deferred peoples of the old. He beheld the destinies of this youthful nation entrusted to the exalted patriot, who in war had been the brave and cautious soldier, and in peace the sagacious and prudent counsellor—then he turned from considering the past to regard again the present, and a determination possessed him, as if from inspiration, to preserve faithfully, at whatever cost, the great trust that had come down to him lineally from the pure patriot, who was "first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

Before his inauguration as President of the United States, Lincoln had witnessed the formalities of secession carried out by the southern states following the bad leadership of South Carolina, that, in December, 1860, declared herself out of the Union and "a free and independent State."

Alas, degenerate sons of Gadsden and Rutledge and Lynch! that it should have been reserved for you to forget the renown of South Carolina, and profane her glory as the founder of the American Union! Alas, headstrong and infatuate state, why did not you, and the followers of your audacious example, pause in your madness before smiting the palladium of liberty, and, on the brink of secession heed the warning utterance of your great patriot, Gadsden, that should forever ring down the ages?—"the province that endeavors to act separately must fall with the rest, and be branded besides with everlasting infamy."

The president elect had seen the southern confederacy organized, and its provisional government established in Alabama. He was aware that troops were drilling in the various southern States, and that State troops had seized national forts, navy-yards, arsenals and treasures of the mint, but hoped against hope that all would prove to be but the effect of "artificial excitement," and that law and order would speedily prevail. His inaugural message proved how loth he was to submit the nation's cause to the fearful adjudication of the sword. "We are not enemies, but friends," he said. "We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patri-

ot's grave to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be by the better angels of our nature." He could not comprehend all his great task at once, but he developed grandly with the exigencies of the time.

"He wrought in sad sincerity,  
Himself from God he could not free,  
He builded better than he knew."

Now the cannonade of Sumter was ended! the lurid fires had gone out, and the smoke of battle had cleared! Far away on the ocean had died the reverberating echoes of the thunderous explosions of artillery, that for thirty-four hours had filled the air with plunging shot and bursting shells. With one hundred guns the brave Anderson had saluted and then lowered his glorious flag. With the strains of "Yankee Doodle" and "Hail to the Chief" from his martial bands, his heroic garrison had marched out of the shattered fort, and steamed their way on the "Baltic" to New York. The frantic citizens of Charleston had reveled in wild exultations of triumph. The huzzas had ceased, the pealing bells were silent, and the grand chant of the *Te Deum* had died away. Fort Sumter was captured, South Carolina was victorious, and all was repose! O, terrible mistake! O, delusive hush! Woe unto thee, doomed Charleston! Shrieks of agony shall issue from the throats that uttered hurrahs, thy silent bells shall anon fill the frightened air with alarms, and thy *Te Deum* shall be revived by offended heaven to wail in thine ears like a *Miserere*! Thy pride shall kiss the dust, for the despised slave shall become thy rude master, and desolate misery shall dwell among thy ruins! Thus closed one act in this great world-tragedy.

The arrogant South had bent too far the springs of northern endurance, and now the mighty reaction began. The day after the ensign of our national glory was hauled down, at the dictation of traitor-hearted insurgents, went forth the president's call to arms, and his requisition for seventy-five thousand volunteers to defend the capital, and secure the property of the government.

Comrades,—you well remember with what alacrity that call was obeyed! You bear in mind the indignation that awoke in every patriotic heart, stung with insult to the nation's flag. You know how the former mild regard for the old flag at once intensified into glowing affection—how you wore it in miniature as a badge of loyalty—how it was flung admiringly to the breezes from public buildings and private dwellings and shops—how it was lifted to the heavens and fixed on the church spires, to receive every day the first salutations of the morning, and to commune with the stars through all the sad night. You remember the enthusiastic meetings of the citizens, and how the intelligence and energy of the people were manifested by their quick perception of the real issue, and the promptness of their action. You remember the marshalling in of arms—how from the

workshop and the field, from the trader's mart and from seminary and college poured forth, multitudinously, the aroused and devoted manhood of the North, eager to constitute itself a bulwark against the raging waters of rebellion, and stay the dangerous surgings against the national capital; and eager, too, to vindicate northern courage, and teach the world, as well as domestic foes, that the spirit of '76 was still alive.

The sounds of the gathering hosts were heard all through the free states, and four days after the president's call, the Massachusetts Sixth, on the 19th of April, entered Baltimore, followed shortly after by the Pennsylvania volunteers, *en route* for Washington. You remember how the infuriated mob of eight thousand rebel sympathizers assailed this noble regiment with clubs and missiles, and firearms, and how two of the early dead of the war, whom we mourn to-day, commemorated by the sacrifice of their lives the anniversary of the historic battle of Lexington.

"Once again, (our dear old Massachusetts!)

Once again the drops, that made their way  
Red, ah not in vain! on that old greensward—

'Twas six and eighty years this very day.

"Once more, dear brother state! thy pure, brave  
blood baptizes  
Our last and noblest struggle for freedom and  
for right—

It fell on the cruel stones! but an awful nation  
rises,  
In the glory of its conscience and the splendor  
of its might."

The mob took possession of the city, and the mayor of Baltimore and governor of Maryland notified the president that no more troops should pass. Then it was that the superb Seventh regiment of the New York State Guard started for the capital, prepared to cut its way with fire and sword through all opposition. Fortunately the necessity for bloodshed was avoided by making a *détour* with transports by way of Annapolis. Tired and worn, the gallant regiment at length reached Washington, and proudly marched up Pennsylvania Avenue amidst welcome shouts and salutations.

Now regiment after regiment from different states poured in, until Washington was crammed with soldiers, and all dangers that menaced the capital being dispelled, loyal hearts breathed freely again.

Self-protection was so far the object of all action, but now the formidable necessity of quelling the rebellion was to be met. The frenzied South had mustered her legions, and it was clear that her seeming madness was not caused by "artificial excitement," but was the logical result of her bad education and her "peculiar institution." Her citizens were largely subject to the controlling influence of a governing class, that regarded its own interests as paramount to all other considerations. The increasing numbers, wealth and power of the intelligent North, with her free institutions, kept that ruling class apprehensive of the future. They might affect to despise the northern mechanic and laborer, but they saw clearly the incompatibility of

liberty and servitude, and that in the Union one of them must inevitably predominate and become national. The threat of the Georgia senator to yet call the roll of his slaves on Bunker Hill, was early felt to be idle, but still, it did not seem altogether vain to expect to establish an independent confederacy, and so secure the perpetuation of the "peculiar institution;" and it was hoped that precipitate action and only a demonstration of force would suffice. For this end they had long sought to prepare the public mind of the South by instilling prejudice against the North, and by inculcating the right of secession. But the people of the North—and largely of the South, too—recognized that the safety and welfare of this free land depended on the indissoluble unity and integrity of the republic, and no mere display of force for compelling dissolution could awe the North into tame acquiescence in the mischievous doctrine of secession, and it remained to test that force.

Accordingly the great preparations for the mighty struggle between liberty and authority were made.

Soldiers of the Grand Army:—You see again these great preparations. You hear the repeated calls for men and more men. You remember how the free North rose in her might and poured forth her ceaseless armies. Again you hear the pulpits eloquent with the voice of religion, concerting with the voice of patriotism, and emphasizing the summons of your country. You recall your consciousness of duty, your sense of manliness, the esteem and affection of them you loved, and who loved you and were proud of you, all urging you to quit the safe and quiet pursuits of peace for the dangers and darings of war. You recall the undrilled regiments hurrying through the streets, with the fresh blue uniforms as yet unstained with blood, you are thrilled again with the cheering hurrahs resounding from sidewalk and houses, and you see the fluttering handkerchiefs waved by the trembling hands of tearful wives, mothers, sweethearts and sisters. In your ears once more sound the shrill fifes and the rattling drums, as in imagination you keep step to the music of the Union, and tramp, tramp, tramp to your white-tented camps and places of *rendezvous*, with the folds of the starry flag floating above you.

Time would fail me were I to attempt to detail the striking events, or to note the many splendid actors, or the important interests of the great strife between that hour, when, in April, 1861, Robert E. Lee, related by blood to the illustrious Washington, sat as Colonel in the United States army, and gazed tearfully on the capital of his country from his piazza at Arlington House, while he painfully revolved in mind the question, where he should fix his allegiance, and the hour when, in April, 1865, Robert E. Lee, now related through blood, in a lost cause, with Jeff. Davis, the inglorious adventurer, and ridiculous fugitive, surrendered, as General-in-chief in the Confederate States?

army, a rebel sword at Appomattox Court House, to Ulysses S. Grant.

These actors, events and interests crowd tumultuously on my mind; months, years, localities and distances become confused, and, methinks, I see all the mighty contest as one grand panorama, in which dates and places are incidents. I see the embattled hosts,

"By thousands and by millions ranged for fight."

I behold the sacred cause personified, as the soul-inspiring leader of the northern legions, and I recognize

"Oh Freedom! thou art not, as poets dream,  
A fair young girl, with light and delicate limbs,  
And wavy tresses gushing from the cap  
With which the Roman master crowned his slave  
When he took of the gyves. A bearded man,  
Armed to the teeth, art thou; one mailed hand  
Grasps thy broad shield, and on the sword; thy  
brow  
Glorious in beauty though it be, is scarred  
With tokens of old wars; thy massive limbs  
Are strong with struggling."

I see the proud and confident hosts of the adversary, the banded powers of slavery, that hastened on to the fray with furious expedition, full of instilled malice and contempt for northern courage.

I behold the beginning of strife! the "sacred soil of Virginia" is trampled on by the invading feet of the north, and the flaunting flag of secession cut down in Alexandria. Now tragically falls the first martyr on southern soil, the gallant Ellsworth, and from his slaughter leaps the prime electric flash to awaken reverberating years of thunder, and his dripping gore affords the first drops of the crimson deluge which ensanguined all the South.

Then come the rushing sounds of the terrible onset! The armies of the North and the South are locked in the fearful embrace of war! The struggle, and rage and din of the horrible tumult seem like the commingling of mighty floods and maddening flames contending in fierce elemental war.

Here, behold the infuriated attacks and counter attacks of pitched battle, where living masses heave and surge, and now here and now there, one or the other dashes on its foe with wild clamor and yells and oaths, and the individual brave drop incessantly, like insects falling in flame; but no heed is paid to their loss in the mad excitement, while infuriated men—with strained eyes and panting breath, and convulsed with slaughterous rage for blood—strive fiercely for victory, and care nothing for their lives, amid the rattling volleys of musketry, the clashing of arms, the roaring of cannon, the bursting of shells, the horrible crash following the explosion of concealed mines, the shrieks of the wounded and the groans of the dying, if only they may make the vanquished yield.

Or yonder is another terrible scene, where a storming cloud of war drives furiously against strong battlements. Wildly that mass rushes on, screaming and shouting into the very cylinders of the murderous guns, whose booming cannonade shall soon arise in the awful diapason of death, when suddenly the



skies are shaken by a blast of sound, and the charging mass recoils from out the sheeted flames and sulphurous smoke, driven back by the leaden rain and iron avalanches that thickly strow the mangled dead and dying all over the ghastly ground, or, with better fortune, the ramparts are carried, and out of the bloody tracks of the assault, the victors rush to plant their triumphant flags on the citadels of the conquered.

And so for four years, with varying fortunes, the tremendous contest went on. The exhaustless North continued to hurl her incessant armies on the conscript and emptied South, where the war-fiend held his horrid saturnalia, until all her fair land was mangled with dead men, and her great rivers ran red with blood.

In vain the struggling South tries with spasmodic desperation to shift some of the horrors of war to the soil of her relentless opponent. The tracks of her bold cavalry raiders disappear, like lines drawn on the ocean's sandy beach, and her great invasion of Maryland resulted only in McClellan's sending Lee across the Potomac with his discomfited army shattered at Antietam, and when, the following year, Pennsylvania was attempted, Lee was terribly punished by Meade in the two days' contest and slaughter of Gettysburg—the critical battle for the Confederacy—and was fortunate to get back to Virginia, leaving behind a third of his grand army. The coronal of liberty was stretched across the country from East to West, and slavery could win no permanent triumphs beyond it.

At length, victory on victory has converted the great Mississippi into a highway of freedom, and no rebel gunboat floats on its majestic current from its confluence with the Missouri down to where Farragut was crowned with chaplets of immortality amid the thunders of Forts Jackson and St. Philip, away below unhappy New Orleans, that too early sang the stirring "Marsellaise" to greet South Carolina's revolt, and the broad waters of the free river divide the Confederacy, and forbid the transit of supplies from the West. And now, like a scourge of God, Sherman has cut his red swath of slaughter from Chattanooga to Atlanta, and flanked it with charred tracts of conflagration through the very paradise of rebellion, then striking northward through the Carolinas, has established his communications with Grant, who has waded through the deep blood of the battles of the Wilderness, fought the terrific but unavailing assaults on Petersburg, and now, with immense reinforcements, was preparing to deal a blow that should let slip all the thunderbolts of war, and strike final doom on the Confederacy.

That blow was dealt, and down tumbled the fabric of conspirators! Richmond, the rebel capital, and Petersburg, its "cockade city," were evacuated! The whole grand scheme of Grant was consummated! The rebel general-in-chief saw that no resistance could avail him further. He accepted the generous terms of the victor, signed his capitulation, and

yielded his sword. The fall of Johnston's great army into the hands of Sherman shortly after was a matter of course.

Charleston was already a heap of smouldering ruins, deserted by its citizens, and its desolate streets trodden by the soldiers of a colored regiment, bearing triumphantly aloft the Stars and Stripes—at once, the emblem of their race's freedom and the ensign of the nation's glory!

Columbia, the state capital of South Carolina, where the first order of secession was passed, was also a heap of rubbish!

Again, the star-spangled banner, with every insult wiped away, floated proudly in triumph over Fort Sumter!

The rebel capital was occupied by federal soldiers! The rebel president was a pitiful fugitive, skulking in abject fear for his wretched life! The might of the despotic power was spent—the collapsed Confederacy had vanished—the Union was safe!

From the slave the shackles had fallen at the wave of Lincoln's mighty pen! In the extended area of freedom stood upright as citizens of the Republic a long oppressed race, that, under God's guidance, had walked out of bondage into liberty by a safe path through the fire and smoke of contending armies!

Now was Columbia, not in song alone but in deed, "the land of the free and the home of the brave!" Now might the great Independence bell ring out the truth, and "proclaim liberty throughout the land, and to all the inhabitants thereof!" Now was our grand country freed from a deadly blight, and its citizens made one homogeneous people, with common rights and common privileges and a common destiny. Now was the terrible struggle between liberty and slavery fought out and finished in a manner that astounded the world by its greatness and its completeness, and

"Humanity with all her tears,  
With all her hopes of future years,"

applauded freedom's glorious victory, and the joyful exultation of the people transcended all human bounds and expressed itself in glad songs of praise and triumphant hosannas to Almighty God for his goodness.

But amidst all these grand considerations and the far-reaching and joyous satisfactions, suddenly came from the war-swept skies a startling report, that threw a dark pall over the nation's joy, and drew a veil of grief from the whole land. Like a thunder-clap broke on every ear the shocking intelligence—*Abraham Lincoln is dead! killed by the hand of an assassin!*

The baleful spirit of secession was not disposed to accept honestly the issue of the wicked contest she had provoked. Besides inciting war, she had plied her meretricious arts and blandishments to tempt the recognition and favor of royal potentates—she had revelled as a fell fury in wanton cruelty at Fort Pillow and Lawrence, and with foul hate desecrated the bones of the fallen at Manassas—like a horrid ogress, she had feasted on the

thin blood of her starving victims within the cruel "dead line" of Andersonville, and the prison enclosures of Belle Isle and Libby and Castle Thunder—but all her arts and attempts were unavailing, and in mad despair, the discomfited spirit saw the bright rays of peace and re-unions beaming through the broken, flying clouds of war, saw herself fading away into the midsts of the unreturning Past, and, in spiteful vengeance, with last, expiring effort, flung her muttering imp at the life of the great Liberator! But her effort was too late to serve her purpose, for his divine mission was finished, and its intent to dishonor him was frustrate, for the comprehending world noted the manner of his taking off as a tribute paid to his greatness, and with universal consent placed the name of Lincoln immortally among the stars as man's benefactor and freedom's patriot-martyr.

Comrades and fellow-citizens:—I have already wearied your patience, yet I have adverted to only a few of the trials, the hardships and sufferings of the war which established our government in the world's respect, and rescued the liberty of the country from its most threatening peril.

Passing by the long and wearisome marches, foot-sore and heavy-laden, through dust and mud and snow, climbing mountains, wading rivers, struggling through forests, the toilsome labors with the spade and axe, the coarse and often scanty food, the life-poisoning encampments in malarious swamps, the sweltering heat and parching thirst of summer and the benumbing cold of winter, I have only taken occasion to intimate the terrible violence of battle on land and water, by which the beautiful lives of many whom we remember and honor to-day have been torn from the lacerated affections of lover and friend that you and I may live as freemen.

But all whose graves we this day decorate with flowers did not suddenly yield their souls on fields of conflict. Enter one of the many buildings over which floats the yellow hospital flag. Ah, this is another scene, a different phase of "glorious war!" In the hot fray of battle, where foe rushes madly on foe, and the excited heart sends the phrensied blood bounding at every beat, and the brain is frantic with wild desire for victory, and the applauding world seems looking on, men may die superbly and tragically, and shout heroic utterances as they expire, which shall live in history, but it requires a grander courage to meet death tranquilly on beds of languishing sickness in military hospitals.

Here no exhilarating spirit of soldierly daring quickens man by man, sympathetically, through whole battalions, and the uniform and sight of the flag inspire all with enthusiasm for the most heroic efforts.

Here the din of war gives place to a stillness that weighs on the spirit almost like the silence of the tomb, and broken only by the occasional moan of the sick or mutilated soldier, or by the low tones of nurses and attendants. The trappings and circumstance of war are laid aside for the undress of the invalid.

Here among strangers, far away from the home of his childhood, where he bade the dear mother a last farewell, has the patriotic boy given his life without a murmur for the welfare of his country.

Here has the once strong man, whose true heart was a sanctuary of domestic affection, whose clear head and vigorous arms ever cherished and protected his loved family, laid him down to die, unblessed by the tender care of his devoted wife, and the sweet presence of his darling children, yet declaring that he yielded his life willingly on the altar of his country, and gloried in the satisfaction of having rounded the period of his existence by the faithful discharge of his duty.

I cannot stand here, to-day, comrades and friends, without feeling deeply sensible of the great concern and interest, the emotions and sentiments awakened in you all by this hallowed occasion. I seem to myself to stand between the living and the dead, to bring before you whose hearts are still grieving, fond memories and grateful and eulogistic recognition of your heroes, honorably discharged from duty here, and recruited into that mystic army that is halting awhile in "camps of green," "till night and sleep pass over"—"sleeping under the sunlight, sleeping under the moonlight, content and silent there at last," where is "the mighty bivouac-field, and waiting-camp of us and ours and all"—and I stand here to be the mouth-piece of them whose patriotic valor served your country in the hour of peril, but whose dumb mouths are sealed forever, to repeat a few words of the story in which they were mighty actors, and declare, as best I may, the admonitions that in soundless sound seem to me to float eloquently forth from the grave of every buried patriot in every cemetery and every field of battle.

I hear them enjoin you to preserve inviolate the great principles of the fathers of the Republic, that have been freshly consecrated with the blood of its defenders, and the tears of widows and orphans. I hear them charge you, as you value your freedom, to secure and maintain national concord, popular intelligence and public integrity, and to hold all who designedly tend to subvert one of these as enemies of liberty.

There is no hatred in the grave, and they plead with you, who deck their mounds with garlands and scattered flowers, and memorialize their virtues and noble deeds, not to forget, but to think of generously, and with elevated minds forgive the valiant dead reposing in other cemeteries, whom they and you fought in battle. Turn not from the memory of their heroic deeds, for they were devoted men, who did their best for what they believed to be right. Glorify the manliness of their endeavors in the recollection that they were Americans, and proudly rejoice that such as they are again your fellow citizens, and in future wars will not be arrayed against you, unless through deplorable wrong, but shoulder to shoulder shall stand with you, presenting an impregnable front to the common foe. Place



the fair garlands and strew the sweet flowers alike, then, oh, Americans, on the graves of them who perished for a "lost cause," and of them who gave their lives for the grander cause which they saved. It was a dreadful mistake for which the southern soldier died, and terrible has been the consequence of his delusion; but he died a soldier's death, and in the grave of his manliness bury all animosity, and prove yourselves victors who are not only able but generous soldiers. So from the honored dust of northern and southern heroes shall spring up the flower of national safety, and airs divine shall waft the aroma of peace and good-will over the whole expanse of our grand and noble land.

I hear the voices of the graves imploring you not to forget the lesson which our fathers taught, that secular education is essential to the life of the Republic, and enjoining you to guard the impartial free-school system of America,—pure from all admixture of heaven that may work changes incompatible with its special purpose and well-tried fitness for qualifying American youth to assume the duty and responsibility of intelligent and unhampered citizens of the Republic. They declare that the free schools are an integral factor of the secular institutions of the land, and not nurseries of speculative theology or religious faith, and urge that pious training should seek its ample opportunities elsewhere, and avoid the misgiving of wisely apprehensive citizens lest there be doubleness in its ulterior purposes. They remind you that representatives of all nationalities and all creeds have found a cordial welcome here, who accept our secular institutions and become co-workers in maintaining the Republic; but they warn you to beware how you allow the attempt of a rash hand to change the ancient land-marks of our fathers, or remove one block from the temple of liberty.

I hear those buried patriots commanding you to insist on public integrity as the corner stone of the Republic. They declare that the liberty of the people to choose their rulers, which the founders of the Republic instituted, and the defenders of the Union conserved, is of little value, if the people lack the virtue to choose honest and faithful ones.

They lament and abhor the deep and extended corruption, which has polluted every department of public trust, and which tends to go on increasing, so long as false men of all parties find undisturbed impunity in mutual fear, and fresh opportunity in mutual reticence, and gives the judicious painful anxiety and small hope for its cure, so long as rapacious schemes for places to plunder, are able to prostitute all means of preferment, and

drive honest men of laudable ambition to private stations. They mourn that the people will carelessly permit the high offices in their gift to become bad eminences, of which the attainment is presumptive evidence of bribery or fraud.

They implore the public conscience to utter its emphatic and stern condemnation of wrong done to the people as vastly more heinous than any private wrong. They invoke the pure spirit of justice, blind to all distinctions of persons, to strip magnificent villainy of its stolen luxuries and imposing state, and send it, degraded and infamous, into swift retribution.

If cunning and impenetrable concealments have masked the corrupt practices of men in public stations, so that legal conviction of malversation and dishonesty cannot be secured, these voices rise from the graves of all good men in denunciation of the successful knaves, whether they mouth the shibboleths of sanctimony or prate their devotion to the welfare of the people, and they demand sentence from the tribunal of public opinion, that is hardly deceived by the cant and chatter of pious seeming and sham patriotism, to consign to social scorn and common infamy all who elaborate public corruption, and fabricate a vast sliding plane down which all the virtue of the state must surely slip into remediless ruin, unless the people awake to the sense of their danger.

From these eloquent graves all over the land comes the warning, like "the mould above the rose"—from them comes the hope, like promised fruition from the flowers.

It behooves you, soldiers, citizens, to heed the warning, to justify the hope. So doing, the lives we this day commemorate will not have been wasted, and from the blood of our heroes shall spring fearless forgiveness of the Past, and earnest vigilance and saving activity for the Future.

Let the whole nation heed these warnings, and the land shall be distinguished for unity, wisdom and probity—and, as the generations multiply with the waning centuries, her strength shall be rejuvenated, and prosperity, happiness and honor be ever replenished by perennial outflows from the eternal fountains of justice and order. So shall our country stand pre-eminent among the nations, a firm and towering monument of peace and good-will to all, a glorious exemplar of a free and enlightened people—at once, a happy home for its citizens, and a glad refuge for the oppressed of every land who long in vain for the enjoyment of liberty and all the inalienable rights, which the God of nature gave to man.

